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First let me say what a great 2019 Fall Seminar we had in Sullivan County.

My home county used to be a regular venue for the NYSAC Fall Seminar, and then over the years our tourism industry weakened, and Sullivan County fell on hard times. But I’m glad to say that we are back, and our conference attendees were witness to why that is: the Catskill’s bucolic scenery and the new economic development investments that are accompanying the Resorts World Casino.

We were happy to host the conference, and we invite you to return, and bring your friends and family.

As I start my term as president of NYSAC and we approach the 2020 State Legislative Session and next year’s budget deliberations, I thought I would reflect on what’s in store for the association.

In November, many county positions will be up for election. This is a biannual event and this year more than 700 county positions are up for election. So we anticipate hundreds of newly elected county leaders will take their oaths of office in January.

NYSAC is here to support these new leaders with education and advocacy efforts and to help them transition or continue their service.

We will have a newly elected training component of our workshops at the 2020 Legislative Conference in January.

Please encourage the newly elected members of your boards to attend. We will continue our strong educational efforts – with the new On Demand Training Program, monthly webinars, and three great conferences next year.

This fall, we have started our work early with the Division of Budget and state agencies on sharing our county priorities for the State Budget and new state initiatives that could help counties better serve residents in our communities. We continue our strong partnership with the Governor, members of the State Legislature and encourage them to pass bills in support of counties and local governments.

At the federal level, we will continue to work with our congressional delegates and NACo to push for policies that strengthen our counties’ abilities to serve the public.

NYSAC has a strong relationship with state and federal agencies, with our colleagues from other municipal associations, and with good government groups across New York. We will continue to work closely with these organizations in support of mutual goals.

Finally, our association continues to explore and develop programs, services, and resources that help county officials. From insurance programs, constituent services, research and reports, and educational offerings, we will keep our focus on making counties stronger, resilient, and more innovative than ever.
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Like many of our member counties have recently done, this year NYSAC staff members went through an exercise designed to identify and prioritize the core values that drive our mission and vision.

The results below confirmed that our association is closely aligned with our member counties. Our core values reflect the values that I have seen in my visits to counties across the state.

Passion for Public Service
NYSAC believes that local government can and does make a positive difference in the lives of county residents. We support our members as they pursue lives of public service, and we are committed to promoting good government and sound policy through research, education, training, advocacy, and member services.

Integrity in Our Work
We believe in acting with integrity at all times. We embrace personal accountability. We hold ourselves and each other responsible for making informed decisions and acting on behalf of New York’s county officials. We demonstrate honesty, fairness, and responsibility in our actions as individuals and as an association. We are trusted by our members and we stand by our work.

Bipartisanship and Diversity
Our membership includes elected representatives from all political parties and diverse backgrounds, and we recognize the strength in our diversity. As an association, we provide access to information and services for all members. We promote civic dialogue and evidence-based decision-making. We respect different points of view and seek to understand other perspectives.
NYSAC’s mission is to represent, educate, advocate for, and serve member counties at the federal and state levels.

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Published 3 times a year by the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), the NYSAC News is the official publication of NYSAC, a non-profit, municipal association serving the 57 counties of New York State and the City of New York with its five boroughs for over 90 years. NYSAC’s mission is to represent, educate and advocate for member counties at the federal and state levels.

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Send submissions to ncorreia@nysac.org. Submissions should be 750 to 1,000 words and include a high resolution photo of the author. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, content and/or length.

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*Cover Photo

Photo Credit

Sullivan County Visitors Association*
Thank you, New York State Association of Counties for holding your 2019 Fall Seminar with us. We hope you enjoyed our Sullivan Catskills hospitality—where we're famous for hosting one of the largest groups of all time—half a million at the 1969 Woodstock Music and Arts Fair.

We hope you'll come back soon and bring your friends and families, too.

1.800.882.CATS  SullivanCatskills.com  #SullivanCatskills  #SullivanCatskillsDoveTrail
Orange County Executive Neuhaus Presented with Award for Public Service

NYSAC presented Orange County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus with its Executive Director Award for Public Service at the 2019 Fall Seminar.

“Public service comes in many ways and County Executive Neuhaus has demonstrated that in Orange County and while serving our country abroad,” Acquario said. “He has earned a reputation for his hard work and his hands-on approach to getting things done. County Executive Neuhaus has made Orange County a leader in economic development and tourism, while strengthening the County’s infrastructure. We look forward to honoring him and showing our appreciation for all of his efforts.”

Neuhaus serves in the U.S. Navy Reserves as a Lieutenant Commander, assigned to a Naval Special Operations Team. He was deployed on active duty orders from November of last year until late-June, serving with the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force. Neuhaus spent the majority of his deployment in various locations throughout Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S. Military Campaign against ISIS.

Neuhaus is Orange County’s sixth County Executive since the office was established in 1970. As County Executive, Neuhaus has focused on revitalizing Orange County’s economic development and enhancing its public health and safety, while improving its infrastructure and stabilizing its budget.

A life-long Orange County resident and the son of immigrants, Neuhaus was sworn into office on January 1, 2014 after having served as the Town of Chester’s Supervisor for six years. He was re-elected for a second four-year term as County Executive in November of 2017.

“T’m humbled to receive this award from NYSAC,” Neuhaus said. “It’s been a pleasure working with Executive Director Steve Acquario and his staff. I consider NYSAC a partner and look forward to continuing to work with Steve and NYSAC on initiatives that will benefit Orange County’s taxpayers.”

Westchester’s Benjamin Boykin Elected to NYSAC Board

Chair of the Westchester County Board of Legislators Benjamin Boykin was elected to serve on the NYSAC Board of Directors during the Fall Seminar in Sullivan County.

“I am very pleased to join the NYSAC Board of Directors, who have a commitment to working together in the best interest of the counties of New York,” said Boykin, “I look forward to working with my fellow board members on behalf of New York’s counties.”

Boykin is a financial executive with more than 40 years of experience. He has been a CPA for 42 years and is currently President of Ben Boykin & Associates, a financial consulting firm.

Boykin has a long and distinguished career as a governmental leader and business executive. During his first term on the County Board, Boykin was chair of the Appointments Committee, where he worked to increase the transparency of the County’s Ethics Board operating with full transparency, with its members legally appointed and confirmed.

During his second term, Ben served as Chairman of the Public Safety & Social Services Committee and served as Vice Chair of both the Budget & Appropriations Committee and the Appointments Committee. He was Co-Chair of the Minority Affairs Task Force. In addition, he has served on the Infrastructure, Legislation and Environment & Health Committees.

“We are honored to have Chairman Boykin on the Board of Directors. His experience and guidance will be an asset to the Association as we continue to address the critical issues facing counties and property taxpayers across the state,” said NYSAC Executive Director Stephen Acquario.
What to Expect During 2020

A Legislative Session Preview

By Ryan Gregoire, NYSAC Legislative Coordinator

If you speak to any lobbyist, advocate, or legislative staffer, they will all tell you that 2019 was an unusually active year by Albany standards. This past year started with a new legislative makeup in the State Senate. Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-Westchester) assumed the role of Senate Majority Leader, ushering in a new era with different legislative priorities.

What Happened in 2019 Does Not Necessarily Stay in 2019…

Before we can speculate on what may happen in 2020, we must look to the past to understand legislative issues that were left out of the end of session as a baseline for issues that will come alive again in January.

During state budget negotiations in March, the final enacted budget included several areas of impact to county governments. Notable reforms, initiatives and appropriations include:

- Passing the Internet Tax Conformity Act - leveling the playing field for main street businesses;
- Securing limited restorations in community college funding cuts proposed by the Governor by increasing the base FTE community college rate by $125 to $2,972;
- Securing $24.7 million in additional state aid to fund the early voting reforms;
- Approving state funding support for substance abuse services in county jails supported by NYSAC and spearheaded by NYSCLMHD;
- Securing an additional $50 million for indigent defense;
- Securing an additional $100 million for implementation costs associated with the Raise the Age legislation that was passed in 2017;
- Defeating proposals to eliminate funding for PINS preventive services, among others; and
- Securing $15 million to address the unmet needs of seniors.

A full breakdown of the state budget impact to counties can be found on the NYSAC website under Advocacy ➔ Legislative Priorities.

Outside of these budget actions, the 2019 Legislative Session began on January 9th and concluded on the early morning of Friday, June 21st. The State Legislature passed a total of 1,719 bills, 935 of which were approved by both houses (and 719 of those passed both houses in the month of June). Those 935 bills must be sent to the Governor by the end of 2019 to be signed into law or vetoed. These include several county home rule revenue bills for mortgage recording, hotel occupancy and sales tax. Home rule bills will be key post-budget legislative priorities going into 2020, as the majority of county sales tax revenue bills will need to be renewed. Counties should be working with their state lawmakers as soon as possible to introduce this legislation and move them through the committee process.

Stronger Together

During the NYSAC Fall Seminar, counties convened to approve resolutions, laying the groundwork of the 2020 Legislative Platform and 2020 Legislative Program.

NYSAC will be closely monitoring and partnering with counties on many issues of importance. There were several proposals that came close to passing during the final hours of the 2019 legislative session. The Human Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act (S.1623/A.2500) would require counties to be responsible for providing new rehabilitative units for county inmates resulting in new costs for counties. In addition to the HALT Act, NYSAC closely monitored the Medication-Assisted Treatment in the
Correctional Settings Act (S.2161-B/A.833-B), working with our affiliate partners and state lawmakers to address county concerns. This legislation would have mandated counties provide and fund all forms of medication assisted treatment for inmates in local correctional facilities.

These are just two examples of legislation that will inevitably be considered again in 2020. NYSAC has already begun a series of meetings with the NYS Division of Budget (DOB), which is an opportunity for our legislative staff to voice county concerns directly to DOB. The 2020 county priorities along with the 2020 legislative platform and program will include NYSAC standing policy, as well as new initiatives approved this past September at the Fall Seminar.

NYSAC Resolutions are County Resolutions

It is important for counties to engage with the NYSAC standing committee process. Resolutions that have been adopted by your county can be proposed for consideration during the winter conference in January. NYSAC is continually looking for advice and guidance from counties to help relay the county position in Albany and Washington.

You can read more about the 2019 legislative session by reading the 2019 New York State Legislative Session Summary report on the NYSAC website, under the Advocacy tab.

What’s Coming in 2020?

In addition to advocating for county home rule bills in 2020, particularly sales tax re-authorization bills, NYSAC will be advocating for many additional legislative and budget priorities. While our 2020 Legislative Program and 2020 Legislative Platform will serve as the official policy agenda of the association, you can expect some of these areas to be included:

- Fully funding county costs related to implementing criminal justice reforms, including discovery and bail reform;
- Reforming the home rule process to grant permanent home rule authority to counties at existing sales tax rates;
- Fully funding local lead poisoning prevention and other public health initiatives;
- Capping the fiscal liability for pre-school special education;
- Expanding Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) to include children with special needs;
- Providing full state reimbursement for community college chargebacks for 4-and-6-year degrees at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT);
- Maintaining the SFY 20 financial commitment for early voting implementation funding;
- Supporting the e-waste collection and disposal program through a renewed appropriation of $3 million;
- Expanding the ZEV rebate for municipalities;
- Fully funding family support service programs to help prevent PINS children from further involvement in the child welfare system;
- Raising the base grant for local public health departments to help ease the burden of lowering blood lead levels;
- Increasing the CHIPS bidding threshold from $250,000 to $500,000 to give municipalities the flexibility to bid out or perform in-house projects that cost less than $500,000;
- Extend design-build authority to counties;
- Modernizing court judgment interest rates;
- Increase DMV fee retention for counties; and
- Oppose HALT Act and MAT in local jails without state financial resources.

NYSAC looks forward to continuing to work side-by-side with our member counties and state leaders in Albany to advocate on behalf of our mutual constituency - the New York taxpayer.

We must educate our state officials about how our counties operate, ensure that all lawmakers understand the county position, and encourage them to always ask, “How will this law be implemented? Is it feasible? What are the costs and whom should be responsible for paying for these programs?”

Our counties and our state are stronger when we all work together. We look forward to working together with you as we enter 2020 and keep our counties in focus. ▲
The adage goes, “Sometimes the best things in life are free.” Taking a drive somewhere in our great state is one of those experiences. (Ok, I’ll admit, gas costs something.) What I’m talking about is moving about to witness the abundance of natural beauty that awaits around almost every corner and not too far off the well-traveled trail. I’m fortunate that my daily work takes me to the far reaches of many counties around the state and often on secondary and tertiary roads that few people rarely see. No complaints here. My phone is chock-full with hundreds of beautiful images of nature, incomparable vistas and awesome places that take your breath away. This is a four-season sport, this nature thing.

There is majestic beauty found in the sunshine that follows a voluminous snowfall deep in the Adirondacks or along our northern border. "Down-staters" like me are in awe learning about the annual snowfall totals in parts of our state and can now explain to those not in "the know," just exactly what those tall poles lining miles of country roads are all about when you see them in summer for the first time, and they seem to be misplaced deep sea fishing gear.

I’m on a perpetual quest to find the "best" vanilla malted milkshake. The distinctive aroma of a thriving dairy business often portends that a satisfactory drink is nearby. Nothing conquers my quest like a fresh shake! My only disappointment is how the youngish purveyors often look perplexed when I ask if they have powdered malt. “What’s that?” Imagine their response if I had asked them to make me an "Egg Cream."

Our state’s landscape is full of wonderful and intriguing sights; barns of every stripe, size and condition, old basketball hoops attached to poles, trees, posts and buildings, artwork in assorted mediums like a stacked stone sailing ship seen on a back road to Cooperstown, a giant metal spider guarding the exit door to a business or standing shapes of steel bent, welded and formed into wonderful things.

Lakes, ponds and streams are a seemingly endless catalog of subject matter in my photo files. I smile every time I pass through a small resort town and see that seaplane parked at the edge of Long Lake. I imagine what the feeling and view must be like from above for someone coming from the hustle-bustle of NYC and touching down in a place of peace, quiet and tranquility for the weekend. Therapeutic? Restorative? Wholesome.

Finally, I think about architecture and the hundreds of structures I get to visit across New York every year. Often, my work brings me to these buildings at the very end of their life cycle. I conjure in my mind’s eye that historic first day of occupancy and envision the joy of crossing that threshold for the first time, "Honey, this is our new home!" When you see the craftsmanship, care and quality of what was built so many years ago, with the requisite details of skilled joinery, masonry and design, and think to the future of someone restoring that property or re-purposing it for contemporary use, I feel a connection between the past and today and am thankful to be a small part of that eco-chain.

Put a little gas in the car and take a drive. It doesn’t really matter which exit you take. Just steer towards the countryside and you will be delighted with all that you see. Don’t forget your camera.

Photos courtesy of Frank Pietrzak
Take a Walk Through History on the Keuka Outlet Trail

By Gwen Chamberlain, Editor, The Chronicle-Express

There's nothing like a leisurely stroll through the woods next to a rambling waterway to help reset and relax. One of the most interesting and scenic walks any time of year is in a ravine between two of New York State's Finger Lakes.

The Keuka Outlet Trail, one of the hidden gems of the Finger Lakes, follows the historic path that has been carefully maintained by volunteers for more than 35 years as a recreational trail. But before it became a destination for those seeking a wild experience, the path was the bed of a railroad line that helped transport goods between Penn Yan and Dresden.

Before that, it was a towpath for a canal that operated between the two villages in the mid-1800s and the birth of industry in Yates County where small communities sprang up around various industries. Before the post-Revolutionary settlers arrived, it was likely a trail used by Native Americans and woodland animals.

For centuries, water flowing from Keuka to Seneca Lake formed a ravine that over the years became the backbone of several pioneering industries. It has become a popular 300-acre gathering spot for picnics, exploring, birdwatching, photography, fishing, hiking and just getting back to nature.

Since The Friends of the Outlet were incorporated 30 years ago, this space that is open to the public from dawn to dusk year-round has been maintained by volunteers who manage and improve the property, maintain the trail, and promote the trail to Finger Lakes visitors. While the organization is largely funded by donations, two funding sources offered by Yates County are helping with some major projects.

Two grants totaling $18,400 from Yates County’s Tourism Advisory Committee have helped pay for special programs and promotional publications, including a popular historic trail guide. Funds for these grants were generated by the county’s occupancy tax.

Two other Yates County Natural Resources grants totaling $33,000, also funded by revenue the county receives from lodging, are helping pay for new amenities, safety, and security improvements along the trail.

Because of that financial support, visitors to the trail can experience the natural beauty, and explore remnants of the former industrial age of the 1800’s and 1900’s. Lining the trail are hidden remnants of gristmills, sawmills, distilleries, and an abandoned bridge connecting to the once vibrant (now extinct) town of Hopeton, where members of a religious organization known as the Society of Universal Friends, first settled in 1788. Remnants of the Crooked Lake Canal, with its 27 locks, run along the north side of the outlet and trail. The Outlet Trail maintains a rustic, wooded appeal with good bird watching areas and parklands along the dirt and asphalt route. An elevation drop of nearly 400 feet, beautiful scenery, gorgeous waterfalls and unusual plant life combine to make this an excellent hike for all enthusiasts.

There is no cost to use the trail, but donations for its maintenance are gladly accepted by the Friends of the Outlet Trail. The 1.3-mile portion of the trail that lies within the village of Penn Yan is owned and maintained by the village, where there are plans to extend the trail all the way to Keuka Lake.

For more information about The Friends of the Outlet, visit http://keukaoutlettrail.org
Renovation in the Court
Madison County Brings 109-Year-Old Courthouse into 21st Century

Madison County recently completed an 18-month renovation of their 109-year-old courthouse. The finished product is a blend of the historic features that made the courthouse unique and modern upgrades to bring the building into the 21st Century.

Prior to the renovation/restoration, Madison County was sued for failure to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The courthouse as it stood lacked accessibility which often resulted in some court proceedings being moved to other buildings to allow individuals with special needs to participate. The county ultimately decided in 2016 not to build a completely new facility, but to renovate and expand the historic courthouse.

During the planning process it was vital that the historic characteristics that made the courthouse unique be maintained wherever possible. Efforts were made to save and restore the original Italian marble floors, stained glass windows, original hand railings, woodwork and much more. The overall new design did not allow for everything to be saved, but when materials were unable to be utilized, efforts were made to mimic the original courthouse look such as wood trim, doorways, light fixtures and more.

“It was important to us to keep the history and craftsmanship of the courthouse,” said Madison County Chair John M. Becker. “This is part of our history, and we wanted to create a building that the people of Madison County would be proud of. We believe we have done just that.”

Madison County worked closely with an engineer/architect and in conjunction with Office of Court Administration (OCA) to develop a design that meets both the present operational needs of the courts as well as the needs of the courts for the foreseeable future. The project included a 9,000 square foot addition built onto the courthouse and a 20,000 square foot renovation to the existing interior. The layout now provides ADA accessibility to the greatest extent practicable. A few of the upgrades include two elevators, ramps in each courtroom, and the replacement of all the doorknobs.

“A new single-story ADA accessible entrance to the courthouse and County Office Building of approximately 1,800 square feet was newly constructed as well.

Not only does the renovated courthouse comply with all local and state building codes, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Office of Court Administration, Madison County worked closely with law enforcement to make sure their needs and security requirements were met as well.

“The Courthouse renovation is something we are all proud of,” said Madison County Administrator Mark Scimone. “From deciding on an ADA accessible design to picking out paint colors to security and functionality improvements, this project was a team effort. When this building was originally built it was advanced for its time, and now after this renovation it is ready to keep up with the technological advancements of the next 100 years.”

“...they kept the beautiful historic content of the courthouse, yet it is one of the most technologically forward-thinking courthouses in our district, it is truly a crown jewel...” Here at Madison County we could not agree more. ▲

On May 25, 2019, Madison County hosted a day long commemoration celebration. Part of the celebration was guided tours of the courthouse, which included historic reenactors for members of the public. At the Ribbon Cutting the Honorable Molly Reynolds Fitzgerald, Administrative Judge for the 6th Judicial District stated “...they kept the beautiful historic content of the courthouse, yet it is one of the most technologically forward-thinking courthouses in our district, it is truly a crown jewel...” Here at Madison County we could not agree more. ▲
The NYSAC Payment Solutions (P-Card) Program, administered by PFM Financial Services LLC (PFM), is a cost-free payments mechanism, which reduces the typical requisition process and related costs associated with purchasing materials and services. The base of the Payment Solutions program, which is a special type of credit card, streamlines the purchase of supplies, furniture, construction materials, utilities and much more, saving staff time and money for your entity.

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Connecting with New York's Legendary Canals

By Miyoko Fulleringer, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Nearly 200 years after its construction, the Erie Canal remains an iconic symbol of American ingenuity and determination. Congress recognized the canal's exceptional scenery, history, culture, and transformative impact by creating the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor in 2000. The Corridor spans the entire NYS Canal System across Upstate New York, connecting more than 200 communities in 23 counties along 500 miles of historic waterway.

The National Heritage Corridor works in partnership with the National Park Service, New York State agencies, non-profit organizations and regional and local communities to preserve our extraordinary canal heritage, promote the Corridor as a world-class tourism destination, and foster vibrant communities.

There are several ways your county can become involved and capitalize on the many opportunities that New York's extraordinary canals present.

**IMPACT! Grants**

Grants are available for education, preservation, and recreational projects that inspire people to learn more about New York's extraordinary canals and discover the Canalway Corridor. Over the past 11 years, 75 projects have gotten off the ground and received $1.84 million in additional investments thanks to Erie Canalway IMPACT! Grants. If you have a project that will protect, enhance or promote canal-related resources in your county, apply by October 18, 2019:

www.eriecanalway.org/resources/grants

**Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor by the Numbers:**

- **23 counties**
- **200** Cities, towns, and villages
- **524 miles** of continuous waterway
- **365 miles** of Canalway Trail
- **$1.3 billion** annual economic impact of canal events and tours

**Event & Festival Sponsorship**

Cultural, heritage, and recreational events and tours have a $1.3 billion economic impact on communities within the Canalway Corridor. We sponsor community events and support large festivals that invite people to explore and connect with the waterway. This year, we supported Madison County’s Boat Float & Bash, which brought over 700 paddlers to the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park. Apply for funding for your 2020 canal-related event in January: www.eriecanalway.org/resources/grants

**NYS Canalway Water Trail**

Earlier this year, we released a Water Trail guidebook and map set to help paddlers navigate New York’s canals. As we work to improve paddling access to the waterway, we are collaborating with Montgomery County Planning to enhance its waterfront and offer kayak storage and better paddling access. Consider ways to improve paddling access or amenities in your county to take advantage of this growing visitor segment: www.eriecanalway.org/watertrail
NY Canal Map

This new interactive online map is unlocking the canal system for all, whether they are local or vacationing by car, boat, bicycle, or on foot. This critical resource brings together the power of mapping tools with a wealth of information on hundreds of places of interest, visitor centers, boat rentals and tours, and paddling access sites. Check your county’s listings and link your county tourism website with the map to help more people navigate to New York’s canals and your county: www.nycanalmap.com

Canalway Challenge

Begun in 2019, this program invites people to trace history while tracking miles on the Canalway Trail and the NYS Canalway Water Trail. With promotional support from Madison, Montgomery, Oneida, Orleans, and Oswego tourism departments, the program is inspiring residents and visitors to walk, cycle, and paddle along New York’s canals and discover all they can do here. More than 1,400 participants from 25 US states, Puerto Rico and Canada completed over 269,000 miles this year. Become involved as a promotional partner to be sure your county is taking full advantage of this program: www.canalwaychallenge.org

Canal Preservation Planning

The canal has been a vital part of the fabric of New York State for almost two centuries; counties play a critical role in preserving its rich heritage for future generations. For example, we are working with Montgomery County Planning to stabilize, preserve, and protect the historic aqueduct at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site. If you have a canal preservation project, be sure to contact us; we may be able to provide technical assistance or point you to grants and funding for your project.

Canal System Bicentennial

New York State is currently celebrating the bicentennial period (1817-1825) of the NYS Canal System. Projects and events that connect people to this historic waterway through interpretation and celebration of its rich heritage, enhancing waterfront amenities, and preservation of its resources receive priority status for many state funding sources. This is an ideal time to consider bicentennial legacy projects and canal enhancement projects for your county: www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov

The communities that make up the Canalway Corridor are a vibrant and integral part of New York State, strengthened by the historic waterway that connects them. Become a part of the living history, the rich heritage, and the exciting future of New York’s legendary canals. ▲

For More Information about the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor visit www.eriecanalway.org

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NYSAC News | www.nysac.org
Visitors to sprawling Steuben County are drawn by the county’s signature attractions — the sparkle of the famous Corning Museum of Glass and the world-class wineries that encircle Keuka Lake like gemstones.

Each year, hundreds of thousands people from across the world tour the glass museum, view glassware exhibits dating back 3,500 years or blow hot glass into a treasured keepsake. They lift their wine glass of award-winning riesling, first introduced to the state — and the northeast United States -- by Ukrainian immigrant Dr. Konstantin Frank.

Air history buffs spend hours in the Glenn H. Curtiss Museum of Aviation, which celebrates pioneer Curtiss’ accomplishments, beginning with the first seaplane in world history which in turn led to a radical transformation of U.S. naval history.

But if that’s all visitors find, in a county that just celebrated its 200th county fair, they miss a wealth of small treasures tucked away in the thickly forested hills and river-fed valleys sprawling across 1,409 square miles.

With lodgings and restaurants always a 20-minute ride away, and ready access off three interstate highways and a state-leading county road system, visitors to Steuben County have their pick from dozens of unspoiled and laid-back attractions.

Just like finding the right wine from Bully Hill to accompany a Golden Age cheese, some Steuben gems just go together, places like Cider Creek in Canisteo and Railhead Brewing in Hornell are a natural fit with hiking in nearby Stony Brook State Park, or fishing and paddling in the Cohocton River.

Craft beers at The Brewery of Broken Dreams in Hammondsport quench thirsts built up after hiking the Mitchellsville Gorge Trail or paddling on Keuka Lake, while a drink at Liquid Shoes in Corning may be just the thing for tired feet after hiking the Spencer Crest Nature Center, located a few miles away.

Boating enthusiasts who are knowledgeable about boats can spend hours in the Finger Lakes Boating Museum, which features 200 boats built by more than 40 commercial builders with connections to the Fingers Lakes. The art of restoring boats is also on display in the museum, located in the former Taylor Wine Company, which dates back to 1886.

Rail looms large in the county as the Erie/Lackawanna carried settlers and goods from the east to the west in olden times and is now poised to become a force in modern transportation with Alstom located in 160-year-old headquarters in Hornell. The Erie Depot Museum, located a couple of miles from the headquarters, offers avid train enthusiasts and history buffs a rare glimpse into the past.

Other historical sites include 45 locations listed on the National Historical Register.

Glass shines in the development of the county and is a mainstay in its history. However, Steuben’s position in the world of glass dots the county landscape in history and current events.

Travelers on Interstate 86 can stop by First Presbyterian Church in Bath and Christ Episcopal in Hornell to view Tiffany Glass church windows, learn to create works of art in glass at Hands-on Glass Studio in Corning or fashion their own brand of pottery at Rocky Hill Pottery in Bath.

And while Steuben is solidly in wine country, with 16 wineries along the 60-mile shoreline of Keuka Lake, refreshment of a homemade kind may be found at the E. H. Lain Cider Mill in Canisteo which has provided fresh-pressed cider, donuts, fried cakes and pies to generations of hungry Steubenites. Betty Kay Bakery in Bath continues to furnish sweet treats to hungry travelers just as it did more than a century ago.

Steuben County has been the destination for thousands of people and businesses throughout the past 200 years. They always found much more than they were looking for.
Craft Beverages Take “Flight”

Adirondack Coast Beer, Wine and Artisan Liquor Culture Reflects Lake Champlain’s Landscape and History

By Alyssa Senecal, Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau

At their most “basic”, high-quality craft beverages are those created by small, independent producers, often by hand. Then again, “basic” isn’t a word true connoisseurs are likely to pair with their favorite wines, brews and liquors, is it?

In the U.S., we’ve been concocting our own beverages since our formative years - even the founding fathers were into it, according to Beer Institute. In fact, most Americans now conveniently live within 10 miles of a craft beer brewer, according to the Brewers Association. Despite their growing availability, craft beverages at large still ignite an all-season cult-like following from travelers looking to experience local interpretations of specific destinations - one tasting room at a time.

If you’re not already immersed in U.S. craft beverage culture, let’s just say: apart from the drinks and their catchy names, it’s the industry’s inherent “too-cool-for-school” attitude and independent mind that fuel its charm, making tastings and tours welcome additions to the itinerary of any free-spirited adventurer, fun-loving recreationist, arts and culture enthusiast…or pretty much anyone, for that matter.

Beyond this, New York State currently claims the second-highest number of active craft distillers in the U.S., according to the American Craft Spirits Association, and the craft beverage industry continues to take “flight” (pun very much intended). It’s no surprise Lake Champlain’s scenic Adirondack Coast only further gains popularity as New York’s up-and-coming beverage destination.

Here, each specially-crafted pint, glass or shot reflects something unique about our way of life, combining the area’s richest agriculture and history resources, like our abundance of maple, apples and cold-hardy grapes, as well as the interwoven narratives surrounding the War of 1812’s Battle of Plattsburgh and the Revolutionary War’s Battle of Valcour. The stops along our Microbreweries and Distilleries Map and our Adirondack Coast Wine Trail showcase innovative styles and ingredients, continuing to pave the way for our region’s distinct beverage culture.

Trust us: what you tap into here, you won’t find anywhere else. And, don’t forget: The Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau happily coordinates group visits! Reach out to alyssa@northcountrychamber.com with questions as you plan your next trip today.

Here’s a taste of what’s in store for your next visit.

Awaken your senses

Our 6 refreshing and nostalgic microbreweries, all offering either full restaurant menus or regularly visiting food trucks. Learn what’s on tap at goadirondack.com/beer.

- Ausable Brewing Company - Keeseville, NY
- Livingood’s Restaurant & Brewery - Peru, NY
- Oval Craft Brewing - Plattsburgh, NY
- Plattsburgh Brewing Co. - Plattsburgh, NY
- Valcour Brewing Company - Plattsburgh, NY

Stir your adventurous spirit

And an artisanally-crafted cocktail while you’re at it - when you check out the following distilleries along our coast.

- Mountain Spirit Distilling - Plattsburgh, NY
- Murray’s Fools Distilling Co. - Altona, NY

Savor the warmth of our wines

Our wines are made from the area’s uniquely thriving cold-hardy grapes, among others. Call in a ride and buckle up for the 70-mile long journey, or hop on the seat of a bike and peddle onward amidst our lake and mountain backdrop, anticipating the flavorful experiences ahead.

- Amazing Grace Vineyard and Winery - Chazy, NY
- Four Maples Vineyard and Winery - Champlain, NY
- Hid-In-Pine Vineyard - Morrisonville, NY
- Highlands Vineyard - Keeseville, NY
- Olde Tyme Winery - Ellenburg Center, NY
- Vesco Ridge Vineyards - West Chazy, NY

Ready to share in the #ThinkLocalDrinkLocal love? Check out goadirondack.com to get started, where you’ll find the info you need to craft your visit. 🍷
It’s near impossible to have your device in hand without being fed an ad by somebody, somewhere, trying to get you to do something. Smartphones and social media networks give marketers all sorts of information and methods to blitz potential customers. It’s the golden age of advertising.

Oversaturation, however, has led to skepticism. We know when we’re being sold something.

So, what do you do as a marketer when your brand is in crisis and your audience is skeptical?

You put your audience to work for you. That’s what we did – and are still doing – in Jefferson County.

We’re blessed to be home to the famed 1000 Islands vacation region with its blue waters, island castles and stunning sunsets. Visitors arrive from all over the world to see this majestic garden of woods and water. They fish Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, hike up our island lighthouses and swim off our docks. It’s paradise.

Our reputation, however, was sullied. High water levels along the lake and river in 2017 sank our docks, hindered our marinas and submerged our campgrounds. Our destination was closed.

Except that it wasn’t. Most of our attractions and communities adapted quickly. There were still endless vacation experiences to be enjoyed. Unfortunately, that story wasn’t being told. Media coverage and social media discussions centered around the high water and the problems it created, particularly on the residential side of things; there was nary a mention of the resiliency demonstrated by our tourism businesses.

As the county’s official tourism promotion agency, promoting that the region was still open became our chief focus. But how, given public weariness to trust brands? Were vacationers really going to shell out their hard-earned dollars in a destination that was maybe underwater just because the tourism organization said everything was OK?

A core part of our leisure market is comprised of people living in Central and Western New York who were intimately familiar with the water’s impacts on their own shoreline. Many had witnessed damage firsthand close to home.

We had to act quickly and find a trustworthy, believable resource to promote our destination to potential visitors. We found that source in the visitors themselves.

We utilized the services of a Toronto company called Crowdriff, which allowed us to search for the best images and videos posted to social media by visitors in our region – in real time – and use them in our marketing materials. Instead of perfectly laid-out tourism images obviously taken before the water came up, our website and social platforms were flooded – pardon the pun – with selfies of people on our cruise boats, monster bass held up for camera phone pics, and multi-hued sunsets. Each image or video had a date stamp and the social handle of the creator. We updated the content regularly so potential visitors saw pictures taken only days before. Instead of telling the world we were open, we let the world show it.

To date, other people’s images and videos – the marketing lingo is “user-generated content” – have been viewed on our website more than 1 million times. Our “High Water Reputation Recovery Campaign” engagement levels surpassed anything we’d done before. Visitor spending in Jefferson County increased almost 3% in 2017 from the year before.
Unfortunately, high water levels returned this year after a break in 2018. Thankfully we have a blueprint for tourism recovery.

Getting visitors to do the work for us wasn’t enough, though, so we activated our residents. The request was simple: no more submerged docks and sad stories. Find the good. Cheer your neighbors.

Tourism is a significant part of our economy in Jefferson County. Hospitality and leisure jobs account for about 10% of our workforce and visitors spent more than $265 million last year. Our residents know tourism is vital; we just needed them to rally behind it.

Email blasts for positivity went to 500-plus tourism businesses in our region. We found locals with large social media followings and arranged for them to have shareable experiences: waterfront dinners, boat cruises and shoreline hikes. We fostered a culture of pride, of teamwork and of resiliency. We spent our marketing dollars promoting stuff we didn’t create.

We did it because it was real. It was genuine. It wasn’t branded content being pushed to a skeptical audience by the official tourism promotion agency.

The 1000 Islands remains a world-class destination; don’t take my word for it though. Go to our site and see hundreds of images taken just this week by visitors at www.visit1000islands.com.
Connecting Erie County with Its Waterfront Through Parks and Trails

By Troy Schinzel, Erie County Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Forestry

Erie County owns and maintains a diverse offering of parks including five heritage parks (one of which is Ellicott Creek Park, along the Erie Canal), two golf courses, twelve forest lots, seven conservation parks, and nine parks along Lake Erie and/or the Buffalo River. Erie County’s parks provide a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities as well as critical habitat preservation. Our lake- and river-front parks (see Table 1 for a complete list) are intended to be connected along county, regional, and state trail networks.

The Erie County Parks Master Plan Volume 3 – Waterfront Access and Trailways provides an overview of existing waterfront trails and parks with recommendations for improving access and linkages.

The Shoreline Trail, envisioned as a continuous multi-use pathway along Lake Erie and the Niagara River, has seen much growth, including an expansion to connect the Industrial Heritage Trail section to Dona Street on the former Bethlehem Steel site in Lackawanna. The approximately 6,500-foot long, 10-foot wide stretch from the City of Buffalo line to Dona was completed in October 2018. The construction of a new public road into the site is the latest step in the site’s transformation from a brownfield back into productive use. The new road, new trail, and existing bus stop also improve connections to the lake side of Route 5 with highly-visible crosswalks and new signal poles. These improvements are in alignment with both the county’s Initiatives for a Smart Economy and the goals of the WNY Regional Economic Development Council. County efforts at the site have already encouraged economic development and attracted new businesses.

At the southern end of the county, Phase 3A of the Shoreline Trail Beaches Section is nearing completion. This portion connects with Phase 1 at Roat Drive, providing a trail from Bennett Beach Park through Wendt Beach Park to Sturgeon Point Road. The trail enters Wendt Beach Park at Shell Road, traveling over some of the park wetlands on a 10-foot wide wooden boardwalk, then moves northward along the inland side of the beach at grade. The trail reaches the landscaped section of the park near the Wendt Mansion and continues eastward on the south side of the park’s center road to become a bike lane on Lake Shore Road to Sturgeon Point Road.

Proposed plans for the future of Wendt Beach Park include a renovation of the historic Wendt Mansion and related structures in a more event-friendly setting for the Lake Erie side of the park, active recreation focused on the street or inland side of the park, and preservation of the existing wooded and wetlands areas. Adaptive reuse of the Wendt Mansion, which presents a great opportunity for a public-private partnership, is important to the preservation of the character of this county park. The Mansion could serve as a meeting place and an economic asset to the area, supporting waterfront revitalization efforts in the Town of Evans.
Shoreline Trails Offer Unique Perspectives

Planned trail efforts in this area include connections northward through the Towns of Hamburg and Evans and a southward extension to Evangola State Park in Brant. Phase 3B of the Shoreline Trail Beaches Section will ultimately connect Wendt Beach, Bennett Beach, Sturgeon Point, Eighteen Mile Creek, Lakeview Pocket Preserve County Park, the Frank Lloyd Wright Graycliff Estate, and SunCliff on the Lake, a restored 1920s mansion hosting events and a bed and breakfast.

We have recently begun to repave, repair, and enhance a nearly six-mile section of the Shoreline Trail Riverwalk, the most heavily trafficked multi-use trail in WNY. This section in Northern Erie County follows the original alignment of the Erie Canal and boasts a small area off-trail where the Canal's topography is preserved. Interpretative signage will recognize the historic significance of this site and pay homage to the corridor’s industrial heritage.

Benches and plantings will be added to the industrial area of the Riverwalk to encourage a more relaxing atmosphere, with additional benches and bicycle repair stations placed throughout Isle View and Niawanda Parks. Construction on this section is expected to begin in the spring of 2020.

The last few years have seen significant development of the Shoreline Trail throughout Erie County as well as the construction and connection of regional and state trails. Erie County remains committed to the completion of the Shoreline Trail as an integral part of a robust trail network that expands far beyond our county.

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NEVER A COST TO MUNICIPALITIES
How County Governments Can Identify and Win Federal Grants

By David S. Carroll and Steve Schultz, Managing Directors, Envision Strategy, LLC

Federal grants are an excellent funding source if counties have a specific project that meets the public good. In the coming year, the federal government will provide over $750 billion in grants for transportation, healthcare, education, job training, income security, social services, environmental protection, and community development, of which nearly $600 billion will go to state and local governments.

Unfortunately, it is too often the case that well-intended, hard-working and committed public officials avoid exploring potential grant options related to their county government because the federal government has not made the process transparent or accessible. State and local governments may draw from a dizzying number of over 1,200 currently funded federal programs to pay for specific, time-limited projects that serve their citizens.

It is well worth the time, effort and resources of counties – from very small to very large – to consider rededicating attention to this large “bucket” of federal dollars. This observation is grounded in the fact that county governments in New York State and throughout the U.S. continue to contend with a retrenchment of county dollars for an ever-growing list of services to its citizens.

While the process is not easy, there are several approaches that can inform local governments as to whether the effort is worth the potential award. Cities and counties need to have a clear definition of what they are trying to fund, have a detailed plan on how to accomplish that result, potentially have other funding available (typically at least 25% from non-federal sources) and a plan for how to sustain the project once the federal investment ends.

The keys to being successful in securing competitive federal grants are: 1) Understanding that federal grants programs are both merit based and to an extent political: having your congressional delegation advocate for you is essential; 2) Getting to know the federal program officers who administer the grants to ensure that your project is a “win-win” - helping the federal agency meet their goals while fulfilling a local community need; and 3) Preparing an application that is easy to read and only addresses the funding criteria.

Additionally, having signed up for Grants.gov, having a current Dun & Bradstreet number, and a single point of contact are critical to success.

Localities must understand that preparing federal grant applications is time-consuming and will require time and potentially, professional assistance. There are pitfalls to avoid, many of which wasted limited resources. Pitfalls include: 1) “Chasing” federal funds by creating projects or programs solely in response to a grant program; 2) Trying to use federal grants to pay for ongoing city/county operations; specific projects are the best candidates; and 3) Trying to “convince” the federal government to fund something that is not in federal law; far better to propose only what the federal government says it wants to fund.

Finding the right match for both the local government and the federal agencies can be an art, rather than a science. The keys are preparation, the willingness to build relationships, and well written proposals to secure a potentially large award that will have a positive impact on a local community.
Sustaining a Robust Public Health Infrastructure

Public Health Responses Require Public Health Resources

By Sarah Ravenhall, MHA, CHES, Executive Director, the New York State Association of County Health Officials

There are 2,800 local health departments in the United States, 58 of which are situated in New York State. Local health departments serve on the front line of all emerging public health crises while protecting and promoting the health, safety and well-being of the residents they serve. As the membership association for New York’s local health departments, the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO), supports, empowers and advocates to advance the work local health departments conduct within their jurisdictions. Public health is a vital government function that addresses our joint responsibility for keeping residents and communities safe and healthy.

Many elements of the 2019-2020 Enacted State Budget undermine public health protections while others hold promise, including removal of the State’s regulated cannabis proposal. When progressive public health policies are passed into law, it is often the local health departments who are on the front lines implementing and adjusting to new mandates. It is critical that we continue to remind policy makers that public health responses require public health resources.

- Article Six state aid for general public health work provides partial reimbursement to support local public health services. This year, Article Six reimbursement was reduced from 36% to 20% for New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This reduction is a significant detriment to public health which will likely have a considerable impact on public health programming.

- The budget includes statutory language to lower the definition of elevated blood lead level from 10 to 5 micrograms per deciliter, which while sound public health policy, will increase workload by an estimated 203% and will cost $35 million dollars to implement. Protecting children from lead poisoning is the first priority of local health departments who will need to hire and train new staff and purchase new equipment in order to adhere to this new mandate.

- Early intervention offers services to babies and young children with developmental delays. In many jurisdictions, we are seeing gaps in service availability and provider capacity which has created long wait lists and barriers to care for eligible families. This year, the budget passed a 5% rate increase for targeted providers including speech language pathologists, occupational therapists and physical therapists. This rate increase is a motivating starting point for addressing barriers to care, however it is yet to be seen how this will truly impact provider wait lists and service accessibility. It is our hope to see this rate increase extended and inclusive of all Early Intervention service provider types next year.

- The recreational cannabis proposal, of which County Health Officials strongly oppose, was not included in the final budget agreement. Findings from other states with legalized recreational programs demonstrate an increase in unintentional exposures in children, related emergency department visits and hospitalizations, calls to poison control centers and motor vehicle accidents. Although there is still time for the Governor and Legislature to work to come to agreement on this issue, there is meaningful evidence to demonstrate that public health must be funded to protect and inform communities.

- New York has long been a national leader in the fight against tobacco, adopting the Clean Indoor Air Act and spending millions of dollars on anti-tobacco advertising and programs. NYSACHO has long supported the State’s aggressive stance against tobacco, and is thrilled to see tobacco 21 legislation passed in both houses which will restrict the purchase of tobacco products, e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco to individuals age 21 and older.

To sustain New York’s public health system, it is critical that the role of the local health department continues to be recognized as an essential service. While we continue to counter escalating public health crises such as the measles outbreak, opioid epidemic, water contaminants, lead poisoning and tick-borne illness, flexible funding that can be used to target unique local level needs is more critical than ever. Ensuring the availability of funding to public health programs will allow counties to mitigate threats to their communities and protect citizens. Remember, public health policy is only as strong as the resources linked to them.

For more information, or to contact the New York State Association of County Health Officials office, please visit www.nysacho.org
Filling Vacancies in County Legislatures in New York

By Isabelle Hayes and Gerald Benjamin, The Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz

Recent actual or potential vacancies in elected offices at every level of government have raised interest in the methods used to fill these. Here we focus on vacancies in the office of elected county legislator in New York counties that have adopted charters in accord with the home rule provision of the state constitution, and find great variety in the methods used to answer a number of key questions. How should efficiency and continuity in government be balanced with assuring democratic representation in choosing a vacancy-filling process? What contingencies must be provided for to deal with the vagaries of the electoral calendar? How do other charter provisions, for example requiring term limits, impact the process for filling vacancies? Should the process be district-based, or county-wide? What consideration should be given to partisan continuity? How can inaction in filling a vacancy—and thus leaving the affected constituency unrepresented—be best avoided?

There are 23 counties in NYS with charters; 22 of these contain provisions on what to do when a seat in the county legislature becomes vacant. Of the 22, Erie is the only one to have a provision for the vacancy to be filled either by the county legislature or the governor. Oneida uses the default process provided in § 43 of the state public officers law: appointment by the governor "...until the vacancy shall be filled by an election," with the proviso that if the term expires in the calendar year in which the appointment is made the appointee serves it out.

The predominant method used in charter counties is for the legislative body to fill vacancies that arise within it. About half (11) of these counties choose their replacement legislator through election by the county legislature. Monroe County, fills its vacancies by an appointment by the President of the County Legislature. Herkimer's Chairman of the County Legislature appoints the interim legislator. In Erie County, the vacancy is filled by a majority vote, with a process that assures that the appointee is a member of the party of the previous incumbent. However, if the vacancy arises because the incumbent was removed from office by the governor, the governor appoints the interim legislator. In Broome, those selected by the legislature to fill vacancies serve until a successor can be elected in a local general election year. In Chemung County, they serve until the end of the calendar year occurring after the first general election that happens after the vacancy—unless the vacancy happens after September 20th, then it's the second calendar year. Notwithstanding the separation of powers principle, Onondaga uses appointment by their county executive.

Three counties require an election to fill vacancies. They are: Nassau, Suffolk, and Tompkins. Nassau County uses special election, except if the vacancy occurred within six months of the next general election. Under this circumstance, or if the vacancy arises in the last year of a member's term, the spot is left open until a successor is elected in November, leaving the seat empty for a relatively lengthy period.

Tompkins fills their vacancy through either special or general election—depending on when it arises. A special election is used if the vacancy occurs on or before August 15th of any year. It also is employed if the vacancy arises on or after September 20th during a year that isn't the legislator's last in their term. A general election is used if the vacancy arises between August 15th and September 20th of any year. It's also used if the vacancy occurs on or after September 20th during the last year of the legislator's term.

Suffolk County attempts to anticipate all contingencies, and thus has one of the most complex protocols for filling a vacancy in the office of County Legislator. Their main provision is to hold a special election within 90 days after the vacancy occurs. However, there are a multitude of exceptions, based upon both the year and the time at which the vacancy arises. Within the 90 day period before the general election in an even-numbered year, the special election is held on the day of the general election, unless the Board of Electors chooses to hold a special election within 60 days after the general. In both cases, the person elected serves the balance of the unexpired term. In an odd-numbered year in which the vacancy occurred within 90 days before the general election, the office stays vacant until the general election. The winner serves the balance of the unexpired term, before starting the term to which they were elected at the general election. In an odd-numbered year in which the vacancy arises within 90 days before the general election, and when new legislative boundaries are used for the first time, the seat remains vacant until the general election, after which time...
the legislature can fill the office by appointment of a resident of the original district before the reapportionment, to serve the balance of the unexpired term. Or, the legislature can leave the office vacant until the end of the expired term. And finally, when the vacancy occurs after the general election in an odd-numbered year in the office of an incumbent who hasn’t been reelected, the legislature can fill the office by appointment of a resident of the district to serve the balance of the unexpired term. The legislature also has the option to leave the office vacant until the end of the expired term.

Schenectady County has a system that differs from the rest. Within 45 days of the vacancy, the chairperson of the county legislature calls a caucus to fill the empty seat. At the caucus, each member of the legislature casts a vote for a candidate to fill the vacancy. If more than two candidates receive votes without obtaining a majority, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated. This continues with each subsequent ballot until a candidate earns a majority. Once an interim legislator is chosen, he or she takes the oath of office, attends the next meeting, and serves until the next general election, when the people can elect a successor. If the vacancy occurs between September 20th and the next general election, the same procedure takes place; however the interim legislator serves until the general election held in the year next following the year of their designation by the caucus.

In Rockland and Ulster legislative vacancies are filled by a vote of the body. If the legislature fails to act however within 90 days, a general or special election is used.

Orange and Dutchess counties prioritize locating choice for successor legislators in the district. Replacements are elected by the board or boards of the towns they represent. In Orange, if there is no timely action at the town level, the vacancy is filled by appointment of the legislative chair; absent action by the chair within 60 days, a special election is called.

In Westchester a special election is used. However, if the vacancy occurs within seven months prior to the end of the legislator’s term, the legislature elects a person to fill it, with the condition that the appointee must resign if he or she becomes a candidate for that or another elected position. This is a clear effort to mitigate an appointee gaining an incumbency advantage for future election.

As noted, an important factor to consider when filling vacancies is continuity. One aspect of this is continuity of party—that the person filling the vacancy must be of the same political party as the incumbent they’re replacing. However, only seven counties require that the interim legislator be of the same political party as the departed elected legislator. Some think that this is a problematic failure to act in accord with the public will. It also has the potential to alter the partisan legislative majority with potentially significant policy consequences.

A majority (14) of the counties have a stipulation in their charter specifying the number of days after a vacancy arises by which it must be filled. Most of them (11) fall between the 30 and 60 day range, ensuring the speedy process (or speedy for bureaucratic standards) of getting someone to fill the empty seat. Sixteen of the 23 counties explicitly state that the person filling the legislative vacancy must reside in that district—one point for the accustomed geography-based idea of representative democracy.

Term limitation provides an additional complication. Monroe County has a provision in their charter that a person elected to the county legislature in 1995, or thereafter, cannot serve more than 10 consecutive years, and must take a two-year hiatus before they can run again. This provision applies to those whose first term is a result of filling a vacancy, however the 10 year count doesn’t start until the first day of January of the first even-numbered year that he or she holds the seat.

In general, this summary suggests a presumption in favor of legislative appointment. This can be seen as a surrogate process for popular election as, in aggregate, legislators represent the entire local polity (except that represented by the absent member). This rationale is reinforced if the appointee's service is limited in duration until the next general election. Continuity in representation for all in the jurisdiction is pragmatically assured, while the primacy of election to fill elective offices is acknowledged.

However, continuity of party isn't required by most of the counties, making it possible that the interim legislator will differ in ideology and policy preferences from the predecessor elected by the people. A legislative leader as the appointing authority is another step removed from the electorate, but is still locally based. Local executive appointment violates the separation of powers principle.

The process set out in state law not only takes the decision out of the hands of the locality, contrary to the spirit of constitutional home rule, but allows the governor's appointee to serve more than a year, depending on when the vacancy arises relative to the electoral calendar. This allows the appointee to become entrenched and enjoy the incumbency advantage if he or she wishes to run for the office.

The variety of means used to fill vacancies in their legislatures confirms once again that New York counties are indeed – in Justice Louis Brandeis’s famous words – true laboratories for democracy.
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Investing in Technology to Break the Burnout Cycle in Child Welfare

By Andrea Tipping, Business Development Manager, Northwoods

Turnover is a chronic problem in children and family services. Complex caseloads and a high-stress environment, coupled with inefficient systems and time-consuming paperwork requirements, often cause workers to burnout and leave, which creates negative ripple effects across an agency.

While not all contributing factors can be controlled, one way to combat the problem is to provide technology that lessens administrative burden. That’s why Jefferson County Department of Social Services (DSS) has invested in technology to give caseworkers more time to do high-value work with children and families.

Jefferson County’s Paperwork Problems

Social Services Commissioner Teresa Gaffney says between 20 and 25% of child welfare caseworkers at Jefferson County DSS turnover each year. Overwhelming paperwork is a large factor.

“Our caseworkers are stretched so thin,” Gaffney said. “They know the real work is done through one-on-one interaction with families, but they’re here in the office trying to get paperwork done instead. They get frustrated that these requirements take them away from what they want to do.”

Besides limiting valuable time with families, the demands of paperwork make it difficult for caseworkers to do their jobs without putting in extra time, which makes it hard for the agency to retain staff.

Despite trying to set expectations during the interview process, new staff don’t realize how much work is required outside of normal hours until they start, which causes them to quickly leave. “You can’t do this job without putting in extra time, but that’s hard to see until you have to do it,” Gaffney said. “We end up spending a lot of time training staff, and then losing staff, and then we have to start all over.”

On top of everything, increasing child protection investigations and an unexpected spike in foster care placements earlier this year have increased demand for services in Jefferson County, which is compounding the agency’s problems.

Shifting Time from Paperwork to People

To mitigate these issues, Jefferson County DSS will use technology designed for efficiency, engagement, and daily work. This means more time to spend with children and families, which will lessen stressful administrative burdens that contribute to turnover.

The technology will help in three key areas:

- Accessing forms in the field. Workers will have immediate access to any form or information they need at any point in time, so they can fully focus on engaging clients. “You never know until you get out there and start talking to the families what the issues may really be,” Gaffney said. “Other things may come to light and you realize you don’t have the right paperwork, so it’s wasted time having to come back to the office, get what you need, and go back out.”

- Uncovering dark data. Turnover creates significant information gaps, as critical information and case history gets buried as the case file moves between workers. An emerging technology called case discovery will help them draw out previously hidden information to make better decisions. “The chances they may miss something, or not see everything they need to see, is there. Having that real snapshot of what the issues might be in the case will be a real benefit,” Gaffney said.

- Reducing duplicative work. Workers throughout New York are required to use CONNECTIONS to record and submit data to the Office of Children and Family Services. Technology that integrates with CONNECTIONS can reduce the need for workers to enter the same data multiple times, further freeing up their time to focus on families.

Gaffney knows the work of child welfare becomes increasingly difficult as cases increase in complexity. Without the right tools in place, turnover will remain a problem.

“I hope to alleviate some of the stress of trying to keep up with paperwork with this solution,” Gaffney said. “If it helps workers manage their cases better, if it allows them more time to spend with families, and if it decreases some of their stress doing their job, then it’s worth it.”
Suspending Inmates’ Federal Benefits Creates Challenges for Counties

By Matthew Chase, CEO/Executive Director, National Association of Counties

The U.S. Constitution is clear: Individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty. So why are people who receive federal health benefits, such as Medicaid, Medicare or CHIP benefits for juveniles, stripped of those benefits when arrested and jailed for an alleged crime, before conviction? If they still enjoy the presumption of innocence, why does the federal government deny benefits to those who have not undergone due process?

The Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP), which denies or revokes federal health and other benefits, is a violation of constitutional rights. This policy not only places undue burdens on local jails but also produces unfavorable outcomes for individuals and communities. The uninterrupted provision of health care helps counties break the cycle of recidivism exacerbated by untreated physical and mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

Seeking Solutions Together

In an effort to amend the MIEP, the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Sheriffs’ Association (NSA) have formed a joint task force comprised of NACo and NSA members – county leaders, law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, behavioral health experts and veterans’ service providers. Among those on the task force are New York county officials, including Chemung County Executive Christopher Moss, Erie County District Attorney John Flynn and Suffolk County Sheriff Errol Toulon, Jr.

The task force is dedicated to exploring and raising awareness of the impacts of this federal policy and its contribution to the national behavioral and mental health crises and rates of recidivism in our jails.

Sheriffs and jails throughout the country are facing an increasing number of inmates with mental health complications, often with co-occurring substance use disorders. There is growing reliance on local jails to serve as one-stop treatment centers for individuals with these afflictions. Without adequate community resources, jails have become de-facto mental health hospitals and treatment facilities.

Under current law, those who can afford bail keep their health care, while those unable to pay – who often experience higher rates of illnesses – face a gap in health coverage. The MIEP creates a double standard that puts unnecessary strain on local judicial, law enforcement, public safety and human services systems, which leads to increased health care costs and poorer health outcomes.

Healthcare Saves Lives and Tax Dollars

Having access to federal health benefits for non-convicted individuals would allow for improved coordination of care, while at the same time decreasing short-term costs to local taxpayers and long-term costs to the federal government. In New York, federal benefits are suspended, not terminated, but that gap could mean the difference between accessing needed mental health treatment and ending up on the streets or back in jail or worse.

Suspended benefits for pre-trial detainees presents constitutional issues and leads to poor health outcomes. We can fix this problem through legislative action and by working together. Federal, state and local governmental partners should work with nonprofits and faith-based organizations to focus on improving care and outcomes for those in need. Together we can increase counties’ ability to provide additional programming and resources to inmates, facilitating smoother transitions into communities without lapses in benefits and medical care.

We invite you to learn more at www.naco.org/healthcareinjails.
Counsel's Corner:
New Local Laws

By Patrick Cummings, NYSAC Counsel

NYSAC tracks and makes available local laws that have been passed by our member counties. Understanding how New York counties are addressing their local issues and resident needs through local laws can provide ideas for you, our government leaders, to use in some variation in your county.

Below is a description of unique and recently passed local laws by our members.

To view the entirety of a local law, visit https://locallaws.dos.ny.gov/.

Dutchess County Enacts Local Law Regulating Canine Tethering

On September 12, the Dutchess County Legislature enacted a local law that regulates tethering of a canine. The legislature stated that “inhumane tethering practices can show a broader disregard for the general welfare of the animal.” Accordingly, the county determined it is in their resident’s best interest to provide education on proper tethering technique and reasonably regulate such practice.

The local law defines “tethering” as a “means to restrain a canine by attaching the canine to any object or structure, including but not limited to a house, tree, fence, post, garage, or shed, by any means, including but not limited to a chain, rope, cord, leash, or running line. It shall not mean a person using a leash to walk a canine or tethering a supervised canine for less than fifteen minutes in a public place.”

The law defines nine (9) separate guidelines of when and how a canine can be tethered including but not limited to: tether type (shall not utilize a choke collar, pinch type collar, or attached weights); length (if the canine is tethered to a pulley, running line, trolley, or cable system, it shall be a minimum of fifteen (15) feet long, less than seven (7) feet above the ground and a tether shall allow the canine to move in an area not less than 125 sq .ft.); appropriate age (the canine shall be at least six (6) months old); weather conditions (the canine shall not be tethered during a Weather Alert nor during any weather that poses an adverse risk to the health and safety of such canine based on the breed, age or physical condition); length of time (a canine shall not be tethered for longer than twelve (12) hours per twenty-four (24) hour period); and conditions (area free from dangerous levels of animal waste, garbage, or noxious odors).

Any person found to be in violation of any provisions of this local law shall, for a first offense, be subject to a fine not to exceed two hundred and fifty dollars ($250); not to exceed five hundred dollars ($500) for a second offense; for a third or subsequent offense not to exceed one thousand dollars ($1,000).

Additionally, any person found to be in violation of any provisions of this local law may be required to register as an Animal Abuse Offender with the Dutchess County Sheriff’s Department after proper notice and hearing.

Suffolk County Creates a Women Veterans Advisory Board

On July 10, Suffolk County established the Women Veterans Advisory Board. This Board was created in response to the legislature’s finding that a substantial number of women veterans reside in Suffolk County and that “it is often difficult for women veterans to congregate and voice their opinions, which leaves them underrepresented in the development of policies and programs that may benefit them.” One of the major goals of this new board is to ensure the County Legislature hears and is meeting the needs of resident service women.

This Board membership shall be all female veterans and appointed as follows: one appointed by the County Executive; one appointed by the Presiding Officer of the County Legislature; one appointed by the Chairperson of the Veterans Committee of the County Legislature; one appointed by the Minority Leader of the County Legislature; one appointed by the Director of the Veterans Service Agency; five appointed by the entire body of the legislature, each of these five must be selected from the five (5) separate service branches.

The Board shall hold at least quarterly meetings and annually submit a written annual report of its findings and determinations and recommendations for action to the County Executive and the Clerk of the County Legislature.
Lewis County Passes Law
Reestablishing the Lewis County Trail System

On August 12, Lewis County passed a local law reestablishing the Lewis County Trail System. The county, citing their power granted under County Law § 219(1), stated that a county may utilize its reforestation properties "for recreation and kindred purposes."

The law states its purpose is to: (a) establish a network of trails and interconnecting roads ("Trail System") that is available for ATV operation throughout the county; (b) establish a set of guidelines for the potential expansion of such ATV trail system; (c) establish a methodology for managing the trail system and implementing appropriate procedures to mitigate environmental impacts and provide for the long-term preservation of natural resources.

The only Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV’s) permitted to utilize the Lewis County Trail System are: ATV’s as set forth in § 2281 of the Vehicle & Traffic Law; registered dirt bikes, UTVs under the weight and length limits set forth in the VTL, but no OHV that is more than 70 inches in width and no more than 2,000 lbs in weight.

OHV use on the trial will require a permit granted by the county. Additionally, all OHV operators must carry the proper proof of insurance coverage at all times while accessing the Trail System.

NYSAC SNAPSHOTSHOTS

Assemblymember Phil Steck, Assemblymember Crystal Peoples-Stokes, and Stephen Acquario

Tioga County Chair Martha Sauerbrey and Stephen Acquario

Stephen Acquario, Treasurer Nancy Buck, and William Cherry in Sullivan County

County Government Institute Fall 2019 Graduates

NYSAC Immediate Past President Charles Nesbitt, Jr. was honored as the Rural Public Official of the Year

WCNY Roundtable on Smart Approaches to Marijuana hosted by Susan Arbetter

Sullivan County members at the Fall Seminar
Making the Most Out of Your NYSAC Membership

By Nicole Correia, NYSAC Communication Manager

When you visit www.nysac.org, you’ll find a host of ever-changing resources to support your work in county government, advocacy activities, and constituent services.

We know the amount of information out there can be daunting, so we’ve put together a guide to help you make the most of your NYSAC membership and the resources that NYSAC’s staff has developed for you.

Cost-Saving Programs and Services
WWW.NYSAC.ORG/RESOURCES

New York’s counties face many challenges. One of NYSAC’s goals is to help counties find innovative solutions to meet those challenges.

Through NYSAC’s partnership programs and the County Marketplace, county leaders can find NYSAC-endorsed programs and services to serve their counties and residents.

These partners have been chosen because they understand the specific needs of counties, can help counties save money, improve the delivery of services, and offer better benefits to county employees.

Timely Videos & Podcasts
WWW.NYSAC.ORG/MEDIA

NYSAC produces videos and podcasts featuring experts on topics pertinent to county government. These recordings go deeper into the policy areas, innovative programs, challenges, and opportunities in our counties.

Tools for County Leadership
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In the Resources and NYS Counties sections of NYSAC.org you’ll find toolkits for advocacy and communication, information for newly-elected county officials, and information about the history of county government. You’ll also find our “101 Ways Counties Serve New Yorkers” publication and helpful downloads.

When you visit www.nysac.org, you’ll find a host of ever-changing resources to support your work in county government, advocacy activities, and constituent services.

NYSAC’s Legislative Team works hard to keep you informed of New York’s rapidly changing policy environment.

All of NYSAC’s resources on policy and legislation can be found at www.nysac.org/policy (click on the specific policy area on the left).

Cutting Edge Education and Training
WWW.NYSAC.ORG/NYSAC-EVENTS

NYSAC hosts three conferences each year:

- Legislative Conference (held annually in Albany in late January)
- County Finance School (held each May), and
- Fall Seminar (held annually in September at various locations throughout the state)

Education is at the core of NYSAC’s mission. Through conferences, webinars, training, the County Government Institute (www.nysac.org/CGI), and regional workshops, NYSAC provides timely and leading-edge information to enable county officials to lead with excellence, integrity, and vision.
Leveraging the Voice of County Leadership

Response to the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act

By Dennis W. Elsenbeck, Head of Energy and Sustainability, Phillips Lytle Energy Consulting Services

In July of 2019, Governor Cuomo signed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). It requires that 70% of generated electricity be derived from renewable energy sources, and that electric generation be supplied 100% carbon-free by 2040. Specifics of the CLCPA include 9,000 megawatts (mWs) from offshore wind, 6,000 mWs of distributed solar, 85% reduction in greenhouse gas by 2050, and aggressively building efficiency targets as well. The legislative roadmap that will lead to regulatory measures and State action will be developed by a 22-member Climate Action Council along with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council and the Climate Justice Working Group. A final Scoping Plan is slated for January 2023. Will county leaders see their constituents, needs, challenges and/or opportunities reflected in the Scoping Plan?

Counties currently contend with various energy-related issues, including aged infrastructure, building efficiency, transportation, site readiness and general smart growth alignment. In addition, they have a wide breadth of underserved communities, Rust Belt neighborhoods, brownfields, economic development priorities, commercial/industrial and residential constituents. Capturing these broad markets in a comprehensive Strategic Energy Plan from counties could provide the right market intelligence and input to assist in making the Scoping Plan market-driven. This would ensure that counties are actual participants, versus spectators, in shaping the CLCPA.

Historically, energy-related goals and objectives formulated in New York State take a top-down approach – with state agencies developing programs and incentives that are focused on set energy goals, not necessarily market needs. Once programs and incentives are formed, they are offered to the marketplace based on specific criteria and/or selected technology aimed at supporting the energy goal. In other words, there is a tendency to create a “solution” without respect to market need and/or engagement. Counties, in the energy space, represent diverse load profiles and demands for energy. They also tend to operate much like commercial consumers in that they have an 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. work schedule – so their high demand for energy occurs during the period which is also the grid’s highest demand. Electric infrastructure is designed for peak periods. If counties could balance their peak periods, that would have a dramatic impact on utility infrastructure investment and would contribute to a renewable energy mix via lower demand. Investment offsets could be utilized to pay for community solar, enhanced programs for revitalizing underserved communities, converting county fleet and construction vehicles to low-carbon alternatives, and focusing infrastructure investment on priority economic development sites such as brownfields.

One of New York State’s Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) objectives is to move electric supply alternatives closer to demand, thus reducing the inefficiency of electric transmission and distribution. A Strategic Energy Plan would inventory county-wide opportunities and align initiatives. These initiatives would be developed by regional planning, Regional Economic Development Councils, economic development agencies, underserved communities, businesses and industries, and other key energy consumers. The Strategic Energy Plan would ultimately be the voice of the counties’ contribution to the development of the CLCPA Scoping Plan. Programs and incentives would then be designed to meet the needs of the market, and once those needs were addressed, they would also contribute to New York State’s energy objectives outlined in the CLCPA.

The CLCPA is a call to arms for county leaders to step forward and develop strategies that will help address current energy-related obstacles while directly contributing to the CLCPA objectives. When the REV proceeding was announced in 2011, the Public Service Commission (PSC) Chair stated that nearly $30 billion will be needed to upgrade New York State’s energy system. The majority of New York State’s energy system tends to be located within our county and city centers. Focusing solutions that directly benefit those centers of activity will increase the probability that the CLCPA will be able to successfully balance economic and environmental sustainability. The CLCPA will take effect on January 1, 2020; the PSC will establish programs to require 70% renewable energy by 2030 and zero emissions by 2040. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will issue a report on greenhouse gas emissions statewide from all sources, and the final Scoping Plan is due by January 2023. The voice of our counties is critical, and the time is now.

Dennis W. Elsenbeck is Head of Energy and Sustainability for Phillips Lytle Energy Consulting Services and a former director of stakeholder and policy for a renowned international utility company. He can be reached at (716) 847-7083 or delsenbeck@phillipslytle.com

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As the New York State legislative session gets underway at the Capitol in Albany, hundreds of county leaders from across the state will convene just up the road to learn about the policies impacting the communities. At the NYSAC Legislative Conference, attendees, speakers, and sponsors will take the local perspective on the big issues impacting our world.

State and national experts will lead workshops on the most pressing challenges and hopeful opportunities facing New York’s counties.

NYSAC’s standing committees will consider the association’s policy platform going forward into 2020, and vote on a series of resolutions. Keynote sessions will highlight new and exciting innovations in local government, and take the long view on what’s coming next.

Keep an eye out for registration information, coming soon. We look forward to seeing you January 27-29 in Albany as we put counties in focus for 2020.

Testimonials

“NYSAC conferences bring you all the tools to be an effective county leader, and to best serve your county: deep dives into policy issues, connections with other county officials from all around New York State, and advocacy resources to make your voice heard at the state and local levels. Every county official from every New York State county should plan to be at the next NYSAC conference.” - Hon. Scott Samuelson, NYSAC President and Sullivan County Legislator

“I encourage every county official to attend NYSAC conferences. There's tremendous value in disengaging from our day-to-day for just a little while to network and share experiences with our counterparts from across the state.” – Charles H. Nesbitt, Jr., NYSAC Immediate Past President and Orleans County Chief Administrative Officer

“I encourage all that can attend, to do so! This is an excellent way to stay on top of the issues, connect with other people doing what you do and learn more about county government.” - Hon. Marte Sauerbrey, NYSAC First Vice President and Tioga County Chair
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Your Guide to Roth 457(b) Contributions

By now, you may have heard of the Roth IRA. You may have even set one up. Well, you also have the opportunity to designate all or part of your contributions to your governmental deferred compensation plan as after-tax Roth 457 contributions.

When you contribute to a Roth 457, you pay taxes on the portion of your salary that goes into the plan; but withdrawals of contributions and earnings can be tax-free during retirement if certain conditions are met.¹

If you wish, you can even split your contributions between traditional, pre-tax 457 contributions and Roth 457 contributions.

What’s the benefit of designating some or all of your contributions as Roth? It gives you the opportunity to pay taxes on your contributions now and avoid taxes later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Let’s compare</th>
<th>Traditional (pre-tax) 457(b)</th>
<th>Designated Roth 457 (Current Tax Bracket: 15%)</th>
<th>Designated Roth 457 (Current Tax Bracket: 25%)</th>
<th>Designated Roth 457 (Current Tax Bracket: 35%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single contribution</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less federal taxes paid on contribution</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net total contribution</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$8,500</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value in 20 years</td>
<td>$46,610</td>
<td>$39,618</td>
<td>$34,957</td>
<td>$30,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less federal taxes at distribution (25% tax bracket)</td>
<td>$11,652</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net distribution</td>
<td>$34,957</td>
<td>$39,618</td>
<td>$34,957</td>
<td>$30,296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These examples are hypothetical in nature and assume a 25% tax bracket at distribution. It also assumes that the retirement plan’s value earns an average total return of 8% compounded annually. Investment return is not guaranteed and will vary depending upon the investments and market experience.

A single contribution of $10,000 will be worth the same amount in 20 years if the tax bracket remains the same.

However, if the future tax rate is greater, the amount distributed from the Roth account will be greater than the post-tax amount distributed from the traditional 457(b) account.
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